

MICHIGAN—CONVENTION OF CITIZENS.

MEMORIAL

OF

A CONVENTION OF CITIZENS OF MICHIGAN,

*In relation to the construction of a Railroad across the Peninsula.*

JANUARY 15, 1835.

Referred to the Committee of the Whole House to which is committed bill No. 201.

*To the honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States in Congress assembled :*

The memorial of the undersigned, on behalf of a convention of the citizens of Michigan,

RESPECTFULLY REPRESENTS :

That, from the time when public attention in the United States was first directed to the importance of railroads as a means of internal communication, all persons acquainted with the general character of the peninsula of Michigan have been struck with its particular adaptation to that species of improvement: its surface being, for the most part, level or slightly undulating, and the inequalities nowhere great. Under this impression, a number of the citizens of the Territory applied to the Executive of the United States, through the War Department, for the services of a competent engineer to examine and survey a railroad route from Detroit to the mouth of the St. Joseph's of Lake Michigan. Two officers were accordingly directed by the Secretary of War to make the survey; it has been completed, and a general report made, of which a copy accompanies this memorial. The result arrived at by the intelligent gentleman charged with the superintendence of the survey fully sustains the views of those at whose instance it was undertaken.

Under these circumstances, your memorialists were delegated by their fellow-citizens to meet in convention to consult upon the means of forwarding a project, deemed of the highest importance to the general interests of the Territory. Situated as we are, the attention of the convention was naturally turned to your honorable body as the only power competent to furnish effectual aid, and as the appropriate patron of a work, passing in its whole length through the national domain, and of which the public treasury would receive the first benefits. When we advert to the many precedents which might be cited, in which Congress,

with a wise liberality, has aided works of public benefit in those States and Territories where the people of the United States at large are the proprietors of the soil, we feel, as is hoped, a just confidence that an enterprise, possessing claims so strong as that now presented to your consideration, will participate in that bounty which an enlightened policy has heretofore extended to neighboring States.

In behalf, therefore, of the citizens of Michigan, we respectfully solicit from your honorable body a grant of lands to the Territory, to be applied in aid of the construction of a railroad from Detroit to the mouth of the St. Joseph's river of Lake Michigan, upon the route surveyed by Lieut. Berrien, under the direction of the Department of War, with such variations of said route as may seem expedient to the Legislative Council of the Territory, or the future Legislature of the State, with a branch to the village of Monroe, and such other branches as the said legislative authorities may direct.

In asking an appropriation of public lands upon a specified route, it will not be deemed superfluous to state some of the grounds upon which we deem that route entitled to the favorable consideration of Congress. That the route proposed is the shortest which could be found to connect Lake Michigan with the waters on our eastern border, we are not prepared to assert; nor, favorable as is the report of the engineer by whom it was surveyed, will we undertake to say that equally good ground for the purpose contemplated may not be found elsewhere. But while the route, to which we invite your attention, is ascertained by competent authority to be highly favorable, it is recommended by the consideration that it passes through the central portions of the Territory, and that the benefits of the contemplated road will therefore be widely felt by its citizens; that it will connect what must ever remain the central point of the commerce of Eastern Michigan with the mouth of one of the largest and most important tributaries of Lake Michigan, a point destined to be of great future importance. As forming part of a line of communication between the country west of Lake Michigan and the Atlantic cities, while we admit the route we advocate not to be the shortest, we believe it to be, all circumstances considered, the best. Detroit offers to the traveller and the man of business, passing from east to west, facilities not found in the same degree at any other point which could be thought of as the eastern termination of the railroad. The mouth of the St. Joseph's, in addition to the advantages before mentioned, will, during the season of navigation, be the point of communication with the West, by means of steamboats across the lake to Chicago. And if it should hereafter be determined to extend the railroad west of Lake Michigan, the route we are considering does not so far deviate from a direct line to the head of that lake, as to form a serious objection to it, as part of this more extended chain of communication.

But while we believe the interests of Michigan, as connected with the matter in question, fortunately to coincide with the general advantage, we avow that, though certainly not insensible to the latter, we regard the first as our primary object, and the last, though important, as incidental. We think that we are placing our petition on no narrow basis when we ask the aid of Congress to prosecute a work which all

admit to be of the highest importance to the commerce and prosperity of this Territory—a Territory in which your constituents are still the owners of nine-tenths of the soil, and over which the powers of your honorable body embrace the widest circle of legislation.

It will be seen, upon reference to the Treasury reports, that the average sales of public lands in this Territory have, for several years past, amounted to nearly half a million of dollars. Much of this sum has been received for lands lying in the direction of the proposed railroad; and while the productiveness of any portion of the public domain is not urged as a claim upon your honorable body, the fact referred to will be received as some evidence that the time has arrived when a long cherished scheme of internal improvement may be commenced with a reasonable hope of success. And your memorialists will ever pray, &c.

JOHN BIDDLE, *President.*

J. S. ROWLAND, *Secretary.*

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DETROIT, M. T., *December 18, 1834.*

SIR: In compliance with your request, I have to state that a survey of the country between this city and St. Joseph's, on Lake Michigan, has been executed under my direction, with the view of ascertaining the practicability of a railroad to connect these points.

This survey is of course preliminary in its nature, such as is required to develop the general character of the country, its adaptation to improvements of the kind, and such as must necessarily be executed before any thing definite in relation to the road can be determined upon, and may be considered as the basis for future operations, rather than as determining the line of the road.

On a route of such length, and through a country generally so favorable, presenting, as it does, but few obstacles, and those of but little importance, a choice of ground becomes the more difficult, from the many routes which are brought into competition, and it is only after each shall have been subjected to a careful examination, and a comparison instituted between them, that a selection can be made.

The survey of a single route, however, may be considered as sufficient for present purposes, the feasibility of the project and its general character being thereby determined, whilst the surveys relating to a definitive location are only necessary when the work is to be commenced.

Different routes presenting themselves, I preferred, for first examination, that which was most direct, and which, as far as my knowledge of the country enabled me to judge, offered at least equal advantages in other respects, whilst that a line of levels over it would better ascertain the general features of the ground, and be more available for future purposes.

Not yet having had time to prepare a map and profile of our route, I cannot of course give you a detailed account of it, but will state the course pursued, and the character of the ground in general terms.

The country between this and Grand river having been previously reconnoitered by Lieutenant Fetterman, the survey was commenced on the 8th day of September last. Starting from the corner-stone of the

court-house in this city, the point to which our levels are referred, the line follows the course of the Chicago turnpike, to the crossing of the river Rouge, near its forks, passes through the village of Dearborn, near the United States arsenal, and, striking the turnpike again, varies but little from it, until it approaches the Huron river at Ypsilanti.

Over this portion of the route but little inequality of surface is met with, the ground being nearly level as far as the crossing of the Rouge, and rising thence gradually to the east bank of the Huron, where it attains an elevation of one hundred and sixty-six feet. Crossing the river at the upper Ypsilanti bridge, the line pursues the valley of the stream as far as Ann Arbor, where it leaves the valley, and, following near the course of the territorial road, falls upon Mill creek near its forks, and thence by the valley of the South branch, through the Short hills.

The ground upon this part of the route differs somewhat in character from the rest, is more rolling, and obliged us to pursue a more winding course, but it is not unfavorable. Some further examinations will be necessary, in order to determine the best manner of approaching and leaving the Huron river, and it was my intention to have made them on our return, but some additional duties required of me by the department put it out of my power to do so. This is not, however, a matter of any importance at present.

The Short hills which have been considered as an objection to this route, can be passed without difficulty in the valley of Mill creek, the greatest elevation being four hundred and thirty-six feet, which is gradually attained, and does not impose the necessity of adopting any high or inconvenient grade.

Between the Short hills and the forks of the Kalamazoo, the course is nearly west—crossing Grand river at Jacksonburg, and the Kalamazoo a few rods below its forks. The greatest elevation upon the whole route is at a point a few miles west of Jacksonburg, and is four hundred and thirty-eight feet above the point of reference. Neither of the above-mentioned crossings presents any difficulties, the valleys at the points selected lying but little below the level of the adjacent country, admitting of their being passed with low grades, and over ground altogether favorable to the construction of the road.

The settlements upon the Kalamazoo, and the water power afforded by that stream, render it desirable that a route should be examined, with the view of extending to that district all the accommodation which might be compatible with the main design; but there is reason to apprehend that, by following down the valley of the Kalamazoo, the dividing ridge between its waters and those of the river St. Joseph's might present some difficulties, or at least a less favorable passage than on the line selected. Believing that so favorable an opportunity of passing this ridge would not again present itself, I was induced to leave the valley of the stream, and to proceed with the survey in the direction of Prairie Ronde. Bearing south, therefore, after crossing the Kalamazoo, our line does not attain an elevation of more than sixty feet above the surface of the stream, and by keeping near the summit of the dividing ridge upon the St. Joseph's side, the numerous streams heading in it are crossed near their sources, where their valleys are inconsiderable; and, consequently, much embankment, as well as rise and fall upon the road, is avoided, while, at the same time, a very direct course is obtained.

The general level is maintained until approaching the head of the Paupau, a stream which empties into the St. Joseph's, near its mouth, and rises in a swamp ten miles in length, and over a mile wide at the narrowest point, where it is crossed by our line. A fall of about one hundred and seventy feet is here met with, within a distance which will not admit of a grade at all proportionate to those required for other parts of the line. It is believed that no other part of the route will require a grade exceeding thirty or thirty-five feet to the mile, and it is very desirable that this grade should not be exceeded, inasmuch as the graduation at one or two extreme points must regulate the loading for the whole route. It will therefore be a matter for future consideration, whether at the point mentioned an inclined plane with additional power be used, or the precipitous descent avoided by a more circuitous route.

From the head of the Paupau to St. Joseph's, the ground is similar to that on other portions of the line, being principally oak plains. No streams of consequence are to be crossed, except the river St. Joseph's, which must be crossed by the road in order to reach the town of St. Joseph's, situated upon the south side, and to obtain a communication with the harbor.

Our line was terminated within the limits of the town on the 8th of November, its whole length being one hundred and ninety-two miles; and it was subsequently connected with the survey of the harbor at that place.

The best manner of approaching St. Joseph's, as well as the point at which the river should be crossed, must depend, in a great measure, upon the plan of construction which may be adopted for the road, and which it is unnecessary to refer to at present.

No rock, however, is met with upon the route, and the foundations will necessarily be of wood. Oak, of every variety, is found throughout in great abundance, and such other timber as may be required can, with very little cost, be brought to either end of the line.

No estimate of the probable cost of the work has been entered into, but it has been ascertained by the survey that no very heavy embankments nor extensive cuts will be necessary; that the soil is generally good, and easy of excavation; that the many extensive plains and prairies which are crossed by the line, will admit of the construction of a road varying but slightly from the natural surface of the ground for many miles at a time, and that much of the timber suitable to be used in the construction of the road, is found along the route; and, further, that comparatively few bridges, viaducts, or culverts will be required, and I have therefore no hesitation in saying, that the expense will be materially less than that of similar works in other parts of the country.

The drawings of our survey will be completed as soon as practicable, and on their completion a detailed report will be furnished.

In the mean time, however, I have much satisfaction in assuring you that our survey fully realizes the anticipations of its projectors, with regard to the very favorable nature of the country.

I remain, sir, very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

JOHN M. BERRIEN,

*Lieutenant of the U. S. Army.*

Major JOHN BIDDLE,

*Chairman of the Railroad Convention.*







